

C. A. Smyth

THE
CHRISTIAN REFORMER,
OR
Evangelical Miscellany.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. PAUL.

VOL. I. HARRISBURG, MARCH, 1, 1829. **No 7.**

ON THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

THE Atonement is regarded by many christians, as one of the most vital doctrines of christianity, the only foundation of hope to sinners: surely, then, it is a subject which ought to be examined with the deepest seriousness, and the greatest impartiality. The design of this Essay is to show under what view it is a scriptural doctrine, what the New Testament contains on the subject, and in what respect it stands connected with the salvation of mankind: and no further notice will be taken of what are deemed erroneous views of it, than a strict regard to christian truth renders necessary. So far as it was taught by Jesus and his apostles, it is both our duty and interest to receive it; by what he and they clearly taught, our faith and practice, as christians, ought to be regulated. If the views commonly entertained of the atonement be found to be inconsistent with the revealed character of God, contrary to the plain dictates of reason, without foundation in the gospel, and opposed to what it clearly teaches, they ought to be rejected. False views of christianity, however popular, or whatever importance may be ascribed to them, so far from being of any use, cannot fail to be injurious; to reject them can involve no danger, but is virtuous and praiseworthy.

In examining the doctrine of atonement, and every other religious subject, we should guard against the influence of party spirit, prejudice and preconceptions; for what party is free from mistakes? What mind will not prejudice mislead? Who has not found many of his preconceptions erroneous? We should resolve not to be tied down to a particular system, not to be awed into an ac-

quiescence in notions, merely because they have been rendered venerable by antiquity, or by the sanction of celebrated names; for what human system is perfect? Have not many acknowledged errors boasted a high antiquity, and been sanctioned by great names? We should take the scriptures as our only guide to religious truth, and common sense for their expositor; and should attend to what they express with simplicity and godly sincerity; we should determine to be guided by evidence, to whatever conclusions it may lead us.

During the long night of barbarism, ignorance, and darkness, almost every part of christianity was perverted. Need we wonder that, during such a period, the lovely character of God was lost sight of; that the mediation of Jesus Christ was misunderstood; that the gospel plan of salvation, the reconciliation of the world to God by Jesus Christ, was exchanged for the notion of a vicarious sacrifice, by which the Almighty is supposed to be made "well-willing and merciful" towards his creatures? It ought not to be wondered at, that such notions obtained at such a time when transubstantiation was generally believed, and the virgin Mary every where worshipped as the mother of God; when the pardon of sin was supposed not to flow from the free mercy of God, but to be procured by human merit, or some valuable consideration; when the salvation of sinners was viewed in the light of a bargain, to be managed by the priests; and when gibbets, racks and tortures, were the arguments used to support religion; but in the present more enlightened age, with the Bible in our hands, and full liberty to judge of its meaning for ourselves, we ought to attain to more elevated thoughts of God, to more consistent views of the gospel; and not to sit contented in the half-illumined cell, when we may walk at large, amidst the cheering beams of the sun of righteousness.

Bigotry and indifference are both inimical to the pursuit and discovery of truth. The bigot will neither hear nor examine, because he is resolved to admit no new light; the indifferent are too little interested to give the attention necessary to enable them to form a judgment, and come to a satisfactory conclusion; but the man whose mind is impressed with the value of truth, and a sense of his own fallibility, will be open to conviction, and think no exertion too great in the pursuit of religious knowledge.

1. *No views of the Atonement can be correct which are inconsistent with the acknowledged principles of the gospel.*

Truth is always consistent with itself; one part of it can not clash with another. So far as the atonement is a christian doctrine it must harmonize with what the gospel clearly and undeniably teaches; and those views of it which cannot be reconciled with the evident principles of the gospel must be erroneous.

1. That God is love, that he loved mankind prior to the gift of his Son, and that the gift of Christ, and all the blessings of salvation, are effects of his previous love to the world, are facts too plainly stated in the New Testament to be denied; it follows, that when the atonement is spoken of as appeasing the wrath of God, turning him aside from the execution of his vengeance on sinners, shielding them from his destroying hand, and procuring for them salvation, this must be a false and unscriptural view of the subject; because it never can be reconciled with the above admitted facts.

2. That the gospel is a system of the free grace and rich mercy of God, to sinful men; that salvation and eternal life are of his grace, are his free gifts; that of his mercy he hath saved us; the New Testament teaches so plainly, that all christians are constrained to admit the truth of these things; consequently, when the atonement is described as a price paid to God for the salvation of men, and for the blessings of the gospel, this is a view of the subject so directly opposed to the acknowledged character and principles of the gospel, so subversive of the doctrine of the free grace of God, that it ought to be rejected.

3. The gospel is a proclamation of the free forgiveness of sins; this no person who has paid any attention to it can deny; if then the atonement be insisted on as a satisfaction to God, or his justice, for the sins of men, by which their exemption from punishment is purchased; which supersedes the necessity of forgiveness, and, in fact, leaves no place for it; a notion so repugnant to the gospel as a proclamation of forgiveness, must be erroneous.

4. As the gospel offers no indemnity to men while they continue in their sins, nor promises safety and happiness to any but those who repent and become obedient, such views of the atonement as lead sinners to suppose that they are secure, and have no future punishment to dread,

because another has been punished in their stead, and that they are made righteous by his righteousness, independently of their becoming personally righteous, must be false, and injurious in their moral tendency.

Other things might be noticed here, but the preceding are deemed the most important. Either some popular views of the atonement must be given up, or some leading and universally acknowledged principles of the gospel relinquished; unless men can make up their minds to receive contradictions as true.

2. *The word Atonement occurs but once in the New Testament.*

It is natural for public teachers to insist most on what they think of the greatest importance. Those teachers who think the doctrine of atonement a leading article of faith, the only foundation of hope to sinners, and that it is of the most vital importance in christianity, insist upon it continually. According to their own views their conduct is right; for they suppose there can be no gospel without it. But how do they account for the conduct of Jesus and his apostles? Did not he and they preach the gospel? How do they account for his never mentioning the atonement? And for the apostles never mentioning it in their public preaching? It is undeniable that the gospel was originally preached without the doctrine of atonement being included in it. Surely this must have been a different gospel from the modern one to which the atonement is essential, and of which it is made the foundation.

Those who have not examined the New Testament on the subject, may expect to find the atonement in every part of that sacred volume; that Jesus Christ, by whom the gospel was communicated, plainly taught it; that the apostles introduced it in all their public discourses, and that it was a leading topic with them both in their preaching and writings. It is natural for those who take it for granted that the doctrines of modern orthodoxy are the very gospel preached by Jesus and his apostles, to expect all this; but, if they examine the New Testament, great will be their disappointment; they will find just the contrary to be the fact. It may surprise such persons to be told, that the word atonement is not to be found in any of the four Evangelists, nor in the Acts of the Apostles, and that it

occurs but once in the Epistles, and no where else in the whole of the New Testament; yet it is undeniable that this is the fact. If it be such an essential and vital part of christianity as its advocates would have us believe, it ought to be as plainly and fully expressed in the words of Jesus and his apostles as the doctrine of one God is, as it is that Jesus is the Christ, as the resurrection from the dead is, and as it is that God will forgive sins freely. How can that be an essential and fundamental doctrine of the gospel which Jesus Christ never so much as mentioned, which his apostles never preached, and which only one of them ever noticed in his writings? Had this doctrine been what its advocates pretend, would not our Lord have taught it, at least, when making known the way of salvation and acceptance with God, when preaching and giving his apostles commission to preach the forgiveness of sins, and when showing them that it was necessary he should suffer and die? On such occasions its modern advocates would not fail to introduce it. Could they have been silent on the subject, as the apostles were, if called like them to preach to numerous assemblies of unconverted sinners, especially when their hearers cried out "what must we do?" They would have directed them to the blood of atonement, and have encouraged them to trust in the righteousness of another. Would not modern orthodox christians suspect any preacher of unsoundness in the faith, who should imitate Jesus and his apostles, by never mentioning the atonement in his preaching? This total silence of our Lord, and of the first teachers of the word, respecting the atonement, on such occasions as its modern advocates would be sure to insist largely upon it, can never be reconciled with the notion that it is an essential part of Christianity; and it shows a marked difference between modern and primitive preaching.

3. *The word atonement, as used in the New Testament, means Reconciliation.*

The building of doctrines upon particular words, and detached passages of scripture, has led christians into many mistakes. Religious doctrines should be founded on a broad and solid basis; such as the character and perfections of God, the plain facts stated in the New Testament, and the positive declarations of Christ and his apo-

ties. We may mistake the meaning of the particular words, or of detached passages, but, if our minds be unbiassed, and fully open to conviction, it will not be easy for us to mistake either what God hath made known of his character, or the plain facts recorded in the gospel. So long as scriptural words continue to be misinterpreted and misapplied, and what are called leading doctrines of the gospel continue to be built on such misconstruction and misapplication of them, it will be necessary to explain them, and to rescue them from such perversion. This observation is applicable to the word *atonement*, which has been supposed to mean, the doing of something to appease the wrath of God, and make satisfaction for the sins of men; than which nothing can be more foreign to its true and scriptural meaning.

When duly considered, the word *atonement* will be found to express a meaning very different from that which is commonly affixed to it; and it will be perceived that its ideal meaning by no means requires the admission that the death of Christ was vicarious, and a satisfaction to divine justice for the sins of mankind.

Atonement, is purely an English word; it is compounded of *at* and *one*, with the termination *ment*, added. (See our best Lexicographers.) To atone, is to set at one, persons or things which are at a distance from each other; an atonement consists in their being set at one. A late excellent writer (*Mr. R. Robinson, of Cambridge,*) says: "Not to trouble you with the Jewish meaning of the word atonement, we have a remnant of old English in scripture, which gives the meaning of it. Moses saw two Hebrews strive together, and endeavoured to set them at one again. Had he succeeded, he would have produced a *onement*, he would have made them *at-one ment*; in plain English, he would have made them friends again." The word *atonement* is of the same import with the word *reconcilement*, used by some of our old writers, and with the more common word *reconciliation*.

The only place in which the word *atonement* occurs in the New Testament is, Rom. v. 11. and in this place it evidently means *reconciliation*. The same original word is in several other places rendered *reconciliation*. (See Rom. v. 10; xi. 15; 1 Cor. vii. 11; 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20.) In this place the margin reads *reconciliation*. Several learned Translators and Expositors, instead of *atonement*

read *reconciliation*. (See HAMMOND, WHITBY, DODDRIDGE, WAKEFIELD, the IMPROVED VERSION, and several others, on the place.) The Latin versions read *reconciliationem*. (See BEZA, MONTANUS, CASTALIO, and the VULGATE, *in loc.*) Thus it appears from the testimony of a number of learned and pious men, of different parties among christians, that in the only place in the New Testament where the word *atonement* is found, it means *reconciliation*: it follows, that there is no christian doctrine of atonement, but that of reconciliation: and hence in this Essay, when what the scriptures teach on the subject is referred to, the words *atonement* and *reconciliation* will be used indifferently, as both meaning one and the same thing.

A proper attention to the ideal meaning of the word *atonement*, and to the true import of the original word which it is used to represent in the only place where it occurs, narrows the controversy on the doctrine of atonement; as it shows that atonement and reconciliation are the same; and the real question relates to the gospel doctrine of reconciliation. The most essential question, on which the controversy hinges, is, who is it that has received the reconciliation, or that Christ died to reconcile? This will be attended to in the next section.

4. *It is not God who hath received the Atonement, who is reconciled to men; but men who have received it, and who are reconciled to God.*

The main question, on the subject we are discussing, is, who hath received the *atonement*? To whom was it made? Who is the party reconciled? The popular notion supposes that it is God who hath received the atonement, that to him it was made, and that he is the party reconciled. If then it can be shown that the scriptures teach no such thing, but just the contrary, and that what they teach is fatal to that notion, the popular doctrine of atonement will be refuted. In whatever way it was made, if not made to God, if he did not receive it, the idea of its being a satisfaction to him for the sins of men, a price which he received for their salvation, falls to the ground. The notion that God received the *atonement* or *reconciliation*, includes the idea of his being reconciled; and that Christ re-

conciled him by his death, is asserted by many of its advocates.

The most direct and positive proof is necessary to support the popular views of atonement; on account of their including what seems inconsistent with the acknowledged character and perfections of God; for every thing that God hath discovered of himself in his works, and revealed of his character in the scriptures, seems to forbid the supposition that he either needed reconciliation, or was capable of being reconciled.

1. It has been shown that to *atone* means to *set at-one*; consequently, atonement implies that something is disordered, out of its proper place, disjointed, or deranged, and requires to be brought into a different state. But could this ever be the case with respect to God? Could the least change ever be necessary in him? Could any disorder ever exist in his nature, character, designs, or conduct? To suppose this possible would be manifestly absurd. Shall it be said that the sins of men kindled a fire of wrath in the *God of love*; turned his infinite benevolence into vindictiveness; and that it was necessary for Christ to experience the fierceness of his wrath, that sinners might be spared? That the *Father of mercies* brandished his flaming sword, and that nothing but its being plunged in his beloved Son, could prevent its utterly destroying sinful men? That such was the nature of divine justice, so infinitely remote was it from mercy, that nothing but the blood of the innocent could satisfy it, and make it just for the absolute Sovereign of the universe to pardon the penitent? That the loving Father of mankind was so estranged from his guilty offspring, that nothing but the death of his Son, who always did those things which pleased him, could reconcile him to them; and that Christ effected this reconciliation by the sacrifice of himself? Shall all this be said, and be called the christian doctrine of atonement? No; nature shudders, and reason revolts, at such a representation, while the gospel utterly discountenances it. As all the enmity, and all the effects of sin, *are in and upon the creature*, and extend not to God; it is reasonable to conclude, that it is on the part of the creature only that reconciliation either is, or ever was necessary; that, as man only is the subject of disorder and disaffection, he only needs atoning, or reconciling. If man be reconciled to God, be delivered from sin and all

its painful effects, what more can be necessary, in order to the complete re-establishment of moral order, purity and happiness?

2. If God received the atonement, by Christ's satisfying his justice, and appeasing his wrath on the cross; it is reasonable to expect a full and plain account of this transaction in the New Testament; but there we find no mention of it. In the only place where the word atonement is found, in the records of genuine christianity, it is not God, but men, who are said to have received the atonement. The positive declaration of the Apostle ought to be regarded as decisive on this point, and to satisfy us that it was not God, but men, whom Christ died to atone, or reconcile. The silence of scripture on a point of such magnitude proscribes it as an article of faith; and what scripture asserts in opposition to it, brands it with the character of error.

3. What has been stated will be further confirmed by a reference to the texts which speak of reconciliation. No where in the New Testament do we read of God's being reconciled. In all the places where reconciliation is mentioned, it is not God, but man who is said to be reconciled. *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.* 2 Cor. v. 19. It is no where said by the Apostles, that Christ was reconciling God to the world; but had this been the fact, they would no doubt have so spoken. The whole plan of reconciliation originated with God, in his infinite love and mercy. Christ was the gift of the Father's love; and his death was designed to assure us of that love. John iii. 16. Rom. v. 8. The death of Christ is never spoken of in scripture, as the cause of God's love to the world; nor as that which excites him to the exercise of mercy. The fact, as stated in scripture, is, that God loved the world as much before he gave his Son, as he hath ever done since; and that he was as merciful, and as ready to exercise mercy, before the Saviour died, as at any subsequent period: had it been otherwise, he would not have given his Son to be the Saviour of the world. Had reconciliation been necessary on God's part, the whole plan of it would not have originated with, and have been carried into effect by *him*; he would not have so far condescended as to beseech sinners to be reconciled to him; on the contrary, in that case, the reconciliation must have been effected by some third party, interposing between

God and men, as God would have been one of the parties to be reconciled; and, indeed, this is the view which the advocates for the popular notion of the atonement seem to have of the subject.

4. Had reconciliation ever been necessary on the part of God, it would have been impossible to have effected it. Had he ever hated mankind, he must always have hated them; had he ever been wrathful and vindictive, such he must have remained to all eternity; for this obvious reason, because he is unchangeable. No thought more alarming can enter the human mind, than that God is wrathful and vindictive: yet this thought the popular notion of atonement, to say the least, suggests. Reconciliation implies a change in the party who is reconciled; therefore, as God is unchangeable, it is impossible that he should be reconciled. If men be at enmity, and you reconcile them, you effect a change in their minds towards each other; but God is in one mind, and none can turn him; Job xxiii. 13. consequently, it is impossible to turn his love to wrath, or "his wrath to grace." Reconciliation cannot take place without changing the mind, or state, of the party to be reconciled: hence it is evident, that there can be neither truth nor propriety in saying "God is reconciled;" because neither his mind nor state, under any view, can be changed. The popular notion of atonement must be false; because it supposes what is impossible, the reconciliation of God. Its advocates may trim and refine the doctrine as much as they please; it will still remain, that either God did or did not, receive the reconciliation; either he was, or was not, reconciled: if the former be asserted, all the absurd consequences, and self-contradictions, charged upon the popular notion unavoidably follow; if it be denied, the notion itself is, in fact, relinquished.

5. The truth is, God never needed reconciling to mankind; because he always loved them; his wrath never needed appeasing; because there neither is, nor was, nor can be, any wrath in him to appease. He hath said, *Fury is not in me.* Isa. xxvii. 4. *God is love;* and as there can be no wrath in love, it follows, that there can be no wrath in God who is love. The Scriptures speak of the wrath of God; but never of wrath in God. By the wrath of God is not meant any attribute of his nature, or principle in his divine mind, or any such passions as we call

wrath in man; but his wrath intends, either a sense of his displeasure in the mind of the sinner, or his outward judgments, which are designed to convince the wicked of the evil of sin, and so to promote their reformation: in both cases the expression is evidently figurative; nor can it be construed literally without ascribing to God what is inconsistent with his acknowledged character and perfections. If there be no wrath in God, there can be nothing in him to appease; for love can need no appeasing. God never hated any thing but sin; he never hated mankind, his own offspring; nor does he hate sin less now than he did before Christ died; it is still the object of his utter abhorrence; he hath threatened it with severer punishment under the gospel, than he did under the law. If we can ascertain that God once loved mankind, we may be sure he hath always loved them, and can never cease to love them; because he is unchangeable. He certainly loved them when he made them; for, as he never could derive any benefit from either their existence or their conduct, nothing but pure goodness, or love, could induce him to make them: and we can account for his continuing them in being only on the ground of his continuing to love them. He is, and hath ever been, good and merciful to all; this is evident from the uninterrupted care and kindness of his providence: And from what can such goodness and mercy flow but love? He certainly loved them when he sent Christ to save them, when he gave him to die for them. This fact, that God always loved mankind, and, that being unchangeable, he can never cease to love them, is a strong and decisive proof that the death of Christ was not necessary to reconcile him to the world. It would be manifestly absurd, to talk of reconciling any being to those towards whom he never felt the least enmity, but whom he had always loved, and treated with kindness and affection. With such manifest absurdity do the popular views of the atonement clog the gospel of Christ, and scandalize christianity.

6. It was on the part of man that reconciliation was necessary, and on the part of man only. The world needed reconciling, because it lay in wickedness; the gentiles, because they were far off from God, and the privileged state of his people; sinners, because they were enemies to God by wicked works. No change in God was necessary. He could not become more pure, more perfect, more lov-

ing and merciful, more forgiving and gracious, than he had always been; but it was necessary to effect a great change in men, and in their circumstances; to qualify them for happiness, and bring them to the enjoyment of it: this change Christ came and died to effect. The great end of the mission, sufferings and death of the Saviour, was to set *mankind at one* with God, to reconcile *them* to him, to make *them* partakers of the blessings of the gospel, and give *them* the hope of eternal life; not to atone the wrath of an angry God, to reconcile him to sinners, and give him a price for their salvation.

(*To be continued.*)



PLAIN THOUGHTS ON SACRIFICES.

ESSAY VI.

In the preceding Essays, several things have been said to show that the Jewish Sacrifices were not vicarious, that the victim sacrificed was not substituted in the place of the person who offered it. Still it may be useful, and, perhaps necessary, to enter more fully upon this point, and to discuss it more particularly; as, on the supposition that sacrifices were vicarious, as well as typical, the advocates for the doctrine of satisfaction for sins build the conclusion, that the death of Christ was vicarious, *that he died instead of sinners*, as a sacrifice for their sins. If it be shown that sacrifices were not vicarious, this conclusion will be destroyed. The notion of giving life for life, in some sort of sacrifices, has long prevailed; it is believed by many christians, and makes an essential part of their creed; but the question is not, what has prevailed, what even multitudes believe, what is to be found in human creeds;—the question is, what the scriptures teach? On them, and on them only, ought Christians to build their faith. If the doctrine of vicarious sacrifices be a doctrine of scripture, considering what must be its importance, it may be expected not merely to be implied, but to be plainly taught there.

1. If the life of the animal sacrificed was given instead

of the life of the offerer, or the person for whom it was offered, it is very extraordinary that this is never mentioned in any part of the Jewish law, in any text which relates to the appointment and offering of sacrifices; that the sacrifices are never called *equivalents*, *compensations* or *substitutes*, or by any name which implies the giving of life for life; but that, to say the most, it should be left entirely to be inferred from words which do not necessarily imply any such notion: yet this is the fact. To say the most of it the doctrine of substitution is merely a doctrine of inference, not a plain doctrine of scripture; and it is unreasonable to suppose that a doctrine of the most essential importance both in Judaism and in Christianity, instead of being plainly taught in the Scriptures, should be left to be inferred from texts which will bear a very different interpretation.

2. It is evident that the offering of animal sacrifices did not necessarily imply the doctrine of substitution; for the notion that the victim died instead of the sinner, could not be conveyed by some sorts of animal sacrifices of which we read in the Old Testament; and if it could not be conveyed by some, it was not necessarily implied in any. In the case of *peace-offerings*, there were no circumstances which could imply substitution: consequently these could not be intended to suggest any such notion, but must have had a different design. *Peace-offerings* were frequently offered by themselves without the addition of burnt-offerings, or trespass-offerings; and of course without any confession of sin or demerit in him that offered them. The life of the animal was taken away, its blood was sprinkled upon the altar, and he who brought it offered with it his prayers or thanksgivings, and had his share of it to eat, and to treat his friends. But in all this there was no intimation, no acknowledgment of any thought of having forfeited life; and of course no notion of offering to God the life of the victim instead of, or as an equivalent for the life of the offender.

3. Sacrifices were offered to God where no crime is supposed as the reason of their being offered, and where the thought of life being forfeited could not enter as the ground of offering them; in such cases the life of the animal could not be substituted in the place, nor offered as an equivalent for the life of him who offered it.

It will be sufficient to instance the following cases: (1)

That of the *Nazarite*. He was not to come near any dead person, and if any man happened to die suddenly near him, he became legally unclean; but the meer circumstance of another's dying by him, whose death he could not prevent, could involve him neither in guilt nor moral pollution; on account of such an occurrence he could be chargeable with no sin, no demerit could attach to him, much less could he be said in consequence of it, to have forfeited his life;—yet he was required to bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass-offering: and upon the supposition that when animal sacrifices were offered, life was given for life, as the *Nazarite* was required to sacrifice a lamb, it must be implied that in doing so he acknowledged some crime, by which his life was forfeited. This case is utterly repugnant to the notion that the Jewish sacrifices were vicarious. Num. vi. (2) The case of the *Leper* that was to be cleansed. The priest was required to take for him one he-lamb for a trespass-offering, with the other offerings, and to wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord; and this was to be done to make atonement for him (the *Leper*.) But the leprosy was an affliction, a disease, not a crime; the being merely subject to it could involve neither guilt nor moral pollution, much less could the being afflicted with this disease imply the forfeiture of life by sinning against God. Still further, “The unhappy *Leper*, if he were able, was to bring not only a trespass-offering, but a sin-offering, and burnt-offering, with a meat-offering, in order to his being cleansed, or to have atonement made for him.” It is said, “The priest shall offer the sin-offering, and make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness; and afterwards he shall kill the burnt-offering; and the priest shall offer the burnt-offering and the meat-offering upon the altar.” Levit. xiv. 11, 12, 19, 20. All this is incompatible with the notion that the Jewish sacrifices imply the doctrine of substitution; for various kinds of sacrifices, wave-offerings, trespass-offerings, sin-offerings, and burnt-offerings were commanded to be offered in cases which implied no guilt, no moral defilement, no forfeiture of life. (3) The case of a woman after child-birth. For her the priest was to offer a burnt-offering and a sin-offering, and so to make an atonement for her. Levit. xii. Yet no one can imagine that the circumstance of her becoming a mother, involved either guilt or moral pollution, much less that it implied a forfeiture of

her life. No intimation is given that these sacrifices were to be offered in reference to any thing of a moral nature, or that they had any thing to do with the redemption of a forfeited life; but it is expressly said that they were to be offered with a view to her cleansing under another and a very different view. See verse 7.

In the above cases we have all the kinds of sacrifices mentioned which were required by the Jewish law; yet in no one of the cases stated is there the least shadow of proof that the design of animal sacrifices was the giving of life for life; on the contrary, such a notion is incompatible with them all. It cannot be shown that in any one of the instances noticed the forfeiture of life is implied, or that God was desired to accept the life of the animal sacrificed instead of the life of the person who offered it. Though peace-offerings, sin-offerings, trespass-offerings, and burnt-offerings were made, and atonement likewise made for the party who offered them, life was not given for life in any of the instances mentioned: no forfeiture of life was acknowledged, nor even confession of moral crime made in offering them; consequently, the offerer could not intend to say that he gave the life of the animal sacrificed instead of, or as an equivalent for his own. It is evident these sacrifices were offered, not with a view to moral, but to legal and ceremonial cleansing; that they were not the price of forfeited life, but the means of keeping up the intercourse of the people of Israel with their God. They had nothing to do with the doctrine of substitution.

4. From the above remarks it is evident that the Jewish sacrifices do not necessarily imply the doctrine of satisfaction for sins; that they were offered in cases in which they could not be vicarious. To complete the argument, it is only necessary to observe, that no sacrifice was appointed nor admitted by the Jewish law, in any case in which life was actually forfeited by the transgression of that law; yet in such case only could they be vicarious. It was only when life was actually forfeited, when the law required that it should be taken away, or, at least, declared that the offender had incurred the penalty of death, that a victim could be offered in his stead, so as to become a substitute for him, and have its life taken away as the price of his life. The advocates for the doctrine of substitution are required to show, *and it is incumbent on them to show*, that the sacrifice of an animal was appointed, or

even admitted, in any case in which the Jewish law declared life to be forfeited, in which it denounced death as a penalty on the transgressor. Till they do this, they, in reality, do nothing to the purpose, so far as the Jewish sacrifices are concerned. They have the Scriptures before them, and if any text can be found in which a sacrifice was appointed to be offered for the offender, whom the law condemned to die, or which asserts that in such a case an animal sacrifice was offered and accepted, they can refer us to that text; but if they cannot do that, all they can allege respecting sacrifices is irrelevant, and has nothing to do with the doctrine of substitution. It is not their inferences that will satisfy us, or that ought to be admitted as proof; we call for declarations of scripture, or facts stated there, as the only evidence which ought to be admitted, or which can be conclusive. If they can produce no such evidence, let them relinquish the doctrine of substitution, as unscriptural. The murderer had undeniably forfeited his life, and in his case the law provided no sacrifice, would allow of no satisfaction; but insisted that the murderer should be put to death, Num. xxxv. 30—33. Why was not a sacrifice allowed in this case, if the sacrifices were vicarious,—if the life of the animal which was sacrificed, was substituted in the place of the forfeited life of the sinner? How was it that the sacrifices were useless, and did not prevent the punishment of those who offered them, when they neglected moral purity and righteousness, if those sacrifices were vicarious?

If the Jewish sacrifices were not vicarious, and the victims offered were not substitutes for those who offered them, though it should be admitted that they were typical, it will not follow that they furnish any argument to prove that Christ died as the substitute of sinners.

If the Jewish sacrifices were expiatory and vicarious, a satisfaction to God for the sins of the people, and victims slain *in their stead*, surely all this would have been plainly stated by Moses, their lawgiver, and not left to be made out by inference, to be gathered from expressions and circumstances which, to say the least, admit of a very different interpretation; for, according to the views of the reputed orthodox, nothing in the whole law of Moses could be more momentous, as the salvation of the people must have depended on their having such views of their sacrifices, and their looking through them, by faith, to the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ. But will any man say,

that the above views of the Jewish sacrifices are plainly stated in any part of the writings of Moses? It is presumed not. If any of the legal sacrifices were expiatory and vicarious, it is natural to expect, that those appointed to be offered on the great day of annual atonement, would be of that description; and that Moses, when giving directions respecting the whole of the service of that solemn day, would distinctly and clearly point out, that such was the character and design of the sacrifices appointed to be offered. We have the account at large, Levit. xvi, on which I shall now make some observations.

1. On the day of this annual solemnity, the high-priest was to make atonement for himself and for his house, for the holy place, the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, and for all the people of the congregation, even for all the children of Israel. *As real an atonement*, in the sense in which Moses used the word, was to be made *for the sanctuary, for the tabernacle, and the altar*, as for the priests and the people. But can any one suppose, that the sacrifices of atonement offered to make an atonement for the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and the altar, were either expiatory, vicarious, or typical? Yet if nothing like this be implied in atonement being annually made for such unintelligent and inanimate things, with the blood of sacrificed animals, neither is it necessarily implied in atonement being made in the same way for the priests and the people. It is evident from the whole account, that by the making an atonement for the holy place, the tabernacle, and the altar, nothing more is meant *than their ceremonial cleansing, their being consecrated, set apart, dedicated afresh*, annually to the service of God. Nothing of satisfaction to God, or one creature dying *instead of another*, could be implied in this procedure. Aaron was said to make an end of *reconciling* the holy place, &c. which implies that it was the holy place &c. which he atoned or reconciled, not God to the holy place, &c. By the ceremonial he put those things into a proper state for the service of God under the law; and the same idea is included in his making atonement for the priests and for the people. It is neither said nor even intimated in any part of the account, that the sacrifices offered were a satisfaction to God for the sins of either the priests or the people; or that the victims sacrificed died instead of either the one or the other; or that it was God who was atoned or reconciled to the people. No hint is given that, through

the whole of this annual solemnity, they were to be looking forward to another and a better sacrifice. The things most necessary to be mentioned, on the supposition that the sacrifices were expiatory, vicarious, and typical, are totally omitted; but if the design of the solemn ceremonial was to bring the people near to God, to reconcile them to him, to cleanse and prepare them for his service, according to the tenor of the covenant he had given them, every thing is said which the case required.

2. It was not merely by sacrifices, by animals whose life was taken away, and the sprinkling of their blood, that the high-priest was to make an atonement for the people; with a live animal, without shedding a drop of its blood, he was to make an atonement. "But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scape-goat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scape-goat into the wilderness." (Levit. xvi. 10.) "And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat; and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man, into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." (ver. 20—22.) This account is deserving of particular attention; because without the life of the goat being taken away, without any of his blood being shed, atonement is said to be made with him, which shows that the making of an atonement does not necessarily imply that what atones must be a vicarious sacrifice, nor indeed any sacrifice at all: and because such language as is used respecting the scape-goat, or any similar to it, is not used of any of the Jewish sacrifices; that is, that all the iniquities and all the transgressions of the children of Israel were put upon his head, and he is said to bear them; and also because the language respecting the scape-goat may serve to illustrate the phraseology of some other texts of scripture. If atonement could not be made, unless that by which it was made became a victim, and bled and died, how could atonement be made with the scape-goat, which neither bled nor died on the occasion, but remained unhurt? On the head of which of the ani-

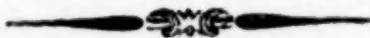
imals, sacrificed according to the Jewish law were all the iniquities, of the children of Israel, and all their transgression in all their sins, said to be put? Which of the slaughtered victims offered on their altar is said to bear their sins? According to the reputed orthodox system, it should have been said of the other goat, which was actually sacrificed, that the iniquities and transgressions of the people were put on his head, and that he was appointed to bear them, not of the goat which was not sacrificed, which did not suffer; but, unhappily for the advocates of that boasted system, the statement given by Moses is the reverse of what it should be to authorize their notions of the Jewish sacrifices and atonements.

The putting all the iniquities of the children of Israel, upon the head of the goat, cannot mean that their sins were actually transferred to the goat, and imputed to him, or that he had even the least consciousness of the sins of the people. This, I suppose, reputed orthodox christians will fully admit. Nor can it possibly be thought that the goat's bearing their sins meant his being punished in their stead, for their sins; though had the goat which was sacrificed been said to bear their sins, some persons would have said he was made a vicarious sacrifice, that he suffered and died instead of the people; but in the case of the scape-goat, nothing like this can be said or thought; for he neither suffered nor died in consequence of his bearing their sins. It is evident there was no literal transfer of either sin, or guilt, or punishment to the goat; that the goat neither did nor could literally bear the iniquities and transgressions of the people. The language can only be understood in a highly figurative sense. The whole scene was clearly designed to show, that God in his mercy would pardon their iniquities and transgressions, when they afflicted their souls, (ver. 29.) that is, were penitent before him, and turned to him according to the directions of his law; that he would remove their uncleanness from them, so as still to own and treat them as his people, and admit them to all the privileges of the covenant he had given them, as much so as if their iniquities had been actually carried away from them, by the goat, into a land uninhabited. In other places of scripture, the bearing of sin means the bearing it away, the removal of it, either literally or figuratively. The goat's being said to bear the iniquities, &c. of the children of Israel could not, of itself merely, alter their moral state,

though it was a ceremonial cleansing, so far as to preserve them in their state of privilege. If they continued morally impure, and disobedient to God's great commands, this ceremonial would not cancel their guilt, nor indemnify them from punishment. No part of their ritual service could render them acceptable to God, any further than they regarded moral purity. See Isaiah, Chap. 1.

3. Moses declared (ver. 30.) what was the design of the whole ceremonial of making atonement, with all the solemnities of that grand Jewish anniversary: "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to *cleanse you*, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord." He did not say; the priest shall make an atonement to appease the wrath of God, and turn away his anger from you, or to make satisfaction for your sins, and to reconcile God to you. He never intimated that the sacrifices of atonement were to have any influence on God, or that they were to alter the aspect of his justice towards the people; on the contrary, he restricts the effects to be produced to the people. It was not to reconcile God, but to *cleanse the people*, that the priest was to make the annual atonement; to remove their legal impurities, to bring them near to God, to encourage their hope in his mercy, to furnish them with motives to moral purity, and preserve them as a separate people devoted to God; in a word, that they might appear clean from all their impurities before the Lord.

Thus, in the part of the Jewish law in which, if any where, we might expect to find the doctrine of expiatory, vicarious and typical sacrifices, no trace of such a doctrine is found; but the whole account is incompatible with that doctrine, relating entirely to the *cleansing of the people*, and preserving them in their state of privilege as Jews, without pointing to any thing beyond that state: consequently, it must be fruitless to look for such sacrifices in any other part of the Mosaic code. R. W.



ON CREEDS, ARTICLES, AND CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.

UNDER this title, it is our intention to call the attention of our readers, to the inconsistencies, contradictions and pernicious consequences of established Creeds and Con-

fessions of Faith, with the view of bringing them into disrepute—of delivering men's minds from their influence and tyranny—and leading them to the sacred scriptures, the only *sure* and *safe standard* of faith and duty.

It is not a little singular, that many of these formularies, which were drawn up with great care, and by men competent to the task, should nevertheless abound with the most plain oppositions, if not palpable contradictions: no wonder then that they should be generally opposed to the New Testament, which is always consistent with itself, and with truth.

Our present paper shall be occupied by a few remarks on the forms of faith and worship in the American Episcopal Church. And here we remark first, that with respect to the *person of Christ*, this Church maintains three distinct and opposite views. She is a Trinitarian—a Nicene—and a Unitarian. This assertion is not lightly made. It shall be established, not in a laboured essay, but by a simple statement of facts.

1. *The Episcopal Church maintains the Supreme Deity of Christ.* “And in Unity of this Godhead, there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Gost.” Art. 1. Here the Son is considered to be equal with the Father, consequently *self-existent* and *eternal*. But,

2. In the Nicene Creed, which this Church has adopted, she maintains that Jesus Christ is neither self-existent nor eternal, for he *derived* his being from the Father. This is its language, I believe “in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, *begotten* of his Father before all worlds: God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one Substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.” Here it is plainly taught, that Jesus Christ was not *without origin* or *God of himself*, as the Father was, for he was only *God of God*, a God whose being was derived from God, he was therefore neither self-existent nor independent. Nor was he eternal, for this creed maintains that he *was begotten of the Father*; the Father must then have existed *before him*. This Creed therefore, differs only in words from the doctrine of *Arius*—the difference is a mere shade. It is not Trinitarianism, like the first article, for it maintains the *dependence* both of the Son and the Holy Ghost, the former was dependent upon *the Father*,

and the latter both upon the Father and the Son, he was consequently *inferior* to both. But,

3. This church has incorporated into its forms, what has long been called *the Apostles' Creed*, which, as it respects the person of Christ is *strictly* and *properly Unitarian*. For it simply maintains that Jesus is the *Son of God* without any reference to pre-existence—without any remark about his being of the same substance with the Father, or equal to him. The Apostles Creed maintains what Peter confessed, “That Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God;” that he was born—suffered—died—was raised again—and now sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. It has been well observed “that this is the most ancient Creed extant, and that by its very nature it purports to set forth, at least, the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and yet here is no one of the articles which now constitute what is called *Orthodoxy*. Here is no avowal of, or reference to the *Trinity*—no implied assertion of the *Deity of Christ*—no notice of the supposed *personality* of the *Holy Ghost*—no hint of the *atonement*—no intimation of the doctrine of *hereditary depravity*—nothing of *personal unconditional election* or *reprobation*, *justification* by faith *without works*, *final perseverance*, *satanic agency*, or *eternal torments*.”

This Creed then is *Unitarian*—strictly and properly *Unitarian*; and as it is the most ancient creed extant, it is a plain intimation that the first christians were Unitarians, and not, in any sense Trinitarians. Reader, from this little essay, you may perceive the danger and uselessness of established creeds or confessions of faith, in order to secure unanimity of opinion. For in the Episcopal Church, which is professedly orthodox, we have creeds and articles which maintain the doctrine of the Trinity—the doctrine of Arius, or something so like it as scarcely to be distinguished from it, for the Nicene Creed represents the Son and the Holy Ghost, as deriving their being in the highest sense, from the Father, they are consequently inferior to and dependant on the Father—and we have the doctrine of the Unitarians most plainly expressed in the Apostles' Creed. Let us then learn from these strange inconsistencies and contradictions, to refuse our assent to any *human standard of faith*, and “to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.” P.

WE have read the numbers of *Priestcraft Exposed* as they have successively appeared, and have no hesitation in recommending it as a valuable and useful work ; a work that is much needed in the present state of our country, when a host of men, under the garb of religion, are using every exertion to deprive us of our civil and religious privileges. Under this impression we insert the following prospectus.]—*Ed.*

PRIESTCRAFT EXPOSED, AND PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY DEFENDED.

AN ardent desire to aid in protecting the liberties of the people against the systematic attacks of the Orthodox Priesthood, induces the Editors of this work to propose its continuance for another year. The present is a time which calls loudly on every friend of *liberal Christianity* to do his utmost to dispel the murky atmosphere of superstition, and thereby cut short the reign of sectarian bigotry: to liberalize and improve the human mind, and lead it rationally to consider "all men free and equal," and that one man has as much right as another, to express an opinion, either religious or political.

Firmly are we assured that *Truth* is omnipotent, and must prevail; and although individuals have expressed fears that by the publication of this work, *Religion* will be injured, yet, we believe the reverse is the fact. *Truth* can never be injured by the attacks of any combinations, and *Error*—the sooner it is prosrated the better. As for *Superstition*, false, cruel and haggard, she is retracing her steps to those loathsome regions whence she emanated. The combined efforts of the priesthood may prolong her stay, but her doom is certain.

Our readers cannot be ignorant of the fact, that an extensive combination of "evangelical" *sectarians*, reaching from one end of the United States to the other, has been in active operation for several years past, avowedly for the purpose of *inculcating sectarian dogmas*—the natural tendency of which, is to *narrow and sour the mind* towards all who may conscientiously doubt the virtue of these *dogmas*. For this *unhallowed and unchristian* purpose, several *sectarian associations* the last year alone, obtained from the people, about *half a million of dollars!* and although this sum is *large*, a very large one to be applied in *such* a manner, yet the sectaries are laying all the plans their ingenuity can devise, to increase their receipts.

Were these exertions for the promotion of useful knowledge—for diffusing the common elements of education among the poor and ignorant classes of our country—or for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, or "pouring the oil and the wine" in the breast of affliction; where is the man who would raise his voice against them? Such a being walks not among human kind. It is a *fact*, a *lamentable fact*, that the *mighty benovelance of the age*, of which so much *boast* is made, in nowise directly tends to make our country more happy. Money from the poor, the ignorant, the

sick and dying is *greedily* taken, and expended in scattering young theologians over our country, who are taught to *contend* earnestly for the *dogmas* of *their teachers*, and denounce the virtuous and the good, whose love of truth will not allow him to call these youths, "Heaven's ambassadors!" By what authority are the *floor* urged to give their pittance for this base purpose? Has any the hardihood to say, that Jesus Christ or the Apostles ever authorised such imposture? Was our Saviour crucified and his system of Religion introduced, for the purpose of forming a hierarchy—one of the most oppressive combinations under which the world ever groaned? Or was he manifested to break the oppressor's yoke, to unbind the heavy laden and set the captive free? The latter truly is the case, as his life and conduct evidently shews, and we are surprised that such extraordinary exertions are made, and such immense expenditures are gone into, by his professed followers, to establish a "religious" and political despotism.

Even *Sunday Schools*, which if properly conducted would produce an immense good, are made subservient to the great plan of oppression. The following from the mouth of the Rev. Samuel C. Aikin, pastor of the first presbyterian society, Utica, expresses the views of the American Hierarchy, unequivocally: Says Mr. Aikin, "I have been surprised to see the apathy of our enlightened statesmen upon the subject of Sunday Schools. I have been surprised that they seem to look upon them only as a *religious* institution, when it is so plain that their **POLITICAL ENERGY** must very soon, if it increases with the ratio it has for fifteen years past, **TOTALLY REGENERATE OUR LEGISLATURES** and the very **HALLS OF CONGRESS.**"—*Pub. by the West. Sund. S. Union.*

ZION'S CALL, published in that celebrated presbyterian paper, the *Boston Recorder*, asserts that *seven hundred and fifty-eight millions three hundred and twenty-three thousand dollars*, are wanted to regenerate the world! And that to supply the United States alone, in the year 1875, it will require *forty thousand evangelical ministers!*

These bold declarations speak for themselves, and to oppose them honestly, openly and with candor, shall be our constant aim. We shall also endeavour to inculcate virtuous sentiments, and advocate the cause of practical Christianity. **THE EDITORS.**

CONDITIONS.

The first number of Vol. II. will appear on the first Monday in May next, in its present size, and continue monthly, each number containing 16 royal octavo pages, at \$1 per ann. *payable in all cases in advance.*

Those who procure *nine* subscribers, shall have *one* copy, gratis. Agents and others, who obtained patrons for Vol. I, will oblige us by continuing their kind offices for Vol. II.

Editors of papers who will give this prospectus an insertion, shall receive one copy of Vol. II.

All communications may be addressed to E. A. COOLEY, Printer, Lockport, Niagara county, N. Y.

Lockport, January, 1829.

Printed by G. S. Peters, Harrisburg, Pa.